

Docket Item #9  
BAR CASE # 2007-0020

BAR Meeting  
April 18, 2007

**ISSUE:** Dormer  
**APPLICANT:** David and Phillipa Wilcox by Patrick Tomlinson  
**LOCATION:** 413 North Fairfax Street  
**ZONE:** RM/Residential

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION, APRIL 18, 2007:** Staff recommends approval of the proposed dormer addition as submitted.

**BOARD ACTION, FEBRUARY 21, 2007:** The Board combined the discussion of docket item #'s 9 & 10. On a motion by Dr. Fitzgerald, seconded by Ms. Neihardt, the Board deferred the applications for restudy. The vote on the motion was 4-0.

**REASON:** The Board agreed with the staff recommendations that the proposed shed dormer was inappropriate and that another style dormer should be considered.

**SPEAKER:** Patrick Tomlinson, project designer, spoke in support

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION, FEBRUARY 21, 2007:** Staff recommends restudy of the proposed dormer addition. However, should the Board approve the present application, Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding; and,
2. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed.

(Insert sketch here)

**Note:** Docket item #8 must be approved before this item may be considered.

**I. ISSUE:**

The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the construction of a new dormer addition on the rear slope of the gable roof. This addition will allow the attic area under the roof to be converted into a third story master bedroom suite. The proposed dormer will be located on the rear slope of the roof, facing east onto the development's common area in the center of the block. It will be visible to the public only through a gap in the building wall along North Lee Street, between 410 and 412 North Lee Street.

The dormer will be in the form of a shed dormer flanked by gabled dormers. The entire dormer will be 18' 4 1/2" wide and 6' high from base to eaves. The walls of the dormer will be clad in Hardiplank brand fiber cement lap siding with a 6" exposure. The drawings note that the fiber cement will have a smooth finish and will be installed so that the nails are not visible. The roof will be clad in fiberglass shingles by CertainTeed in a "Slatestone" color similar to the gray of the existing roof shingles. The trim will be AZEK, cellular PVC. The ends of the dormer will have gable roofs while the center section will have a shed roof. There will be one window in each gabled section. The center section will be set back 1' from the face of the gable ends and will have a paired window. The windows will be double hung wood windows with simulated divided lights. The windows, trim and siding will be painted. There will be white aluminum downspouts.

The applicant has provided a letter from the Princess Street Homeowners Association dated April 4, 2007, approving the revised design for the project.

**II. HISTORY:**

The house at 413 North Fairfax Street was constructed in 1977 as part of the Princess Street Townhouses development project in a Federal Revival design style. There is no record of prior Board reviews for this property. While the Board has approved skylights for at least two other houses in the Princess Street Townhouses development, there do not appear to have been any previous dormer additions.

**III. ANALYSIS:**

The subject property is zoned RM/residential. Per the residential cluster plan for the development (SUP#1044), the subject property has no rear yard requirements. The subject property meets the FAR requirements per the submitted FAR calculations and RM zoning. Therefore, the proposed rear dormer addition complies with the zoning ordinance requirements.

In the opinion of Staff, the revised design represents a substantial improvement over the previous design. That design featured a single large shed dormer with two widely spaced windows. Staff noted that the *Design Guidelines* state that "[s]hed dormers are strongly discouraged" (Dormers – Page 1). The previously proposed shed dormer consumed nearly the entire east slope of the roof and seemed inappropriate in scale for the modest building. Therefore, Staff had

recommended that the design be restudied to reduce the bulk of the dormer addition, perhaps using a series of smaller dormers. The Board agreed with Staff's analysis.

Staff believes that the revised design meets the objectives of the Board and Staff, although the addition remains a single large dormer. While the width has not been significantly reduced, the overall height of the dormer has been reduced by 1' to 2'. It has been pulled back from both the lower and upper edges of the roof. Further, the central section is now recessed. The revised design breaks down the apparent visual mass of the dormer through the use of gable dormers on the ends. Lastly, the two additional windows serve to lighten the appearance of the addition. Given these improvements and the fact that the dormer will be only minimally visible from the public right-of-way, Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

The applicant proposes to use Hardiplank for the walls of the dormer. The Board has adopted the following policy with respect to fiber cement siding:

1. That fiber cement siding not be installed on an historic structure;
2. That historic materials should not be removed to install fiber cement siding;
3. That fiber cement siding replace other artificial or composite siding;
4. That the nails not show in the installation of the siding;
5. That smooth (not wood grained) siding be installed; and,
6. That BAR Staff may administratively approve the installation of fiber cement siding on *non-historic* buildings (those constructed in 1975 or later).

Based on this policy, the proposed use of Hardiplank siding is acceptable as long as the nails not show in the installation of the siding and smooth siding is installed. The revised drawings include notes to this effect. The applicant is also proposing to use Azek trim, a synthetic trim material that has previously been proposed for a number of other projects in the Old and Historic District. As the material is being used on a new addition and the house itself dates to the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, staff has no objection to the use of Azek trim.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the application as submitted.

CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F- finding

Code Enforcement:

- C-1 Alterations to the existing structure must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- C-2 Additions and alterations to the existing structure and/or installation and/or altering of equipment therein requires a building permit (USBC 108.1). Five sets of plans, bearing the signature and seal of a design professional registered in the Commonwealth of Virginia, must accompany the written application (USBC 109.1).
- C-3 A Construction permit will be required for the proposed project.
- C-4 New construction must comply with the current edition of the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).

Historic Alexandria:

No comments were received.